

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUDAPE 03951 191903Z

44

ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 607

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUDAPEST 3951

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PFOR

SUBJECT: NEW HUNGARIAN FOREIGN MINISTER-SIGNIFICANCE
AND OBSERVATIONS

1. AS DEPARTMENT UNDOUBTEDLY AWARE (FBIS) OFFICIAL
HUNGARIAN PRESS ANNOUNCED DEC 14 THAT ON JOINT
RECOMMENDATION OF PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL, HSWP, AND
PATRIOTIC PEOPLES FRONT JANOS PETER, FONMIN SINCE 1961,
"RELIEVED" OF HIS DUTIES AND REPLACED BY STATE UNDER
SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS FRIGYES PUJA. PETER DISMISSED WITH
LITTLE
FANFARE, ONLY QUALITATIVE COMMENT MADE ON HIS LONG PERIOD
AS FONMIN BEING MTI COMMENT THAT HE HAD BEEN RELIEVED OF
HIS DUTIES "WITH MERITORIOUS RECOGNITION OF HIS PERFORMANCE".
PUJA'S POST AS UNDERSECRETARY ASSUMED BY JOSZEF MARJAI, A COLORLESS
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PAGE 02 BUDAPE 03951 191903Z

BUREAUCRAT WHO SINCE JUNE 1971 HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE AS AN ASST

FOREIGN SECRETARY FOR HUNGARY'S RELATIONS WITH SOCIALIST COUNTRIES.

2. DESPITE FACT THAT IT HAS BEEN MORE OR LESS WIDELY KNOWN THROUGHOUT BUDAPEST POLITICAL COMMUNITY THAT PETER NOT IN BEST OF HEALTH AND WANTED OUT FOR SOME TIME, STILL IMPRESSION CANNOT BE ESCAPED THAT HIS DISMISSAL (AND THAT IS WHAT IT APPEARS TO BE) WAS SOMEWHAT SUDDEN. INK HAD HARDLY DRIED ON GOH-PRG COMMUNIQUE FOR INSTANCE, BEFORE ANNOUNCEMENT MADE THAT PETER OUT AND PUJA IN. IN FACT, PUJA WAS SWORN IN BY PRESIDENT LOSONCZI BEFORE ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHANGE MADE PUBLIC.

3. IMMEDIATE QUESTION POSED IS WHAT CHANGE MEANS IN TERMS OF HUNGARIAN POLICY, PARTICULARLY TOWARDS WEST IN LIGHT OF PUJA'S IMPRESSIVE HARDLINE CREDENTIALS. BASICALLY WE DO NOT BELIEVE THERE WILL BE ANY SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN POLICY SIMPLY BECAUSE OF PUJA'S REPLACEMENT OF PETER. IF THERE IS TO BE A POLICY CHANGE OF MAJOR PROPORTIONS IT HAS TO DO WITH FACTORS OF FAR GREATER SIGNIFICANCE THAN SIMPLY CHANGE IN HUNGARIAN FONMIN. PETER WAS NEVER MUCH MORE THAN AN ERRAND BOY FOR SOVIETS AND, WHILE PUJA MAY BE SOMETHING MUCH MORE IN EYES OF SOVIETS, BASIC POLICY WILL BE AS IN PAST IN MOST IMPORTANT MATTERS, STRICTLY DOWN MOSCOW'S ALLEY. THERE IS LIKELY TO BE, HOWEVER, A CHANGE IN STYLE. WHERE PETER WAS SUAVE AND OBLIQUE, PUJA IS LIKELY TO BE CRUDE AND DIRECT. WHERE PETER WAS AGILE AND WITTY, PUJA WILL BE STIFF AND INTENSE. PUJA WILL PROBABLY PRESENT THE FIGURE OF A MAN MUCH MORE IN CHARGE OF HUNGARIAN POLICY THAN PETER EVER DID: HE WILL APPEAR MUCH MORE CONFIDENT THAN THE SOMEWHAT DIFFIDENT PETER. BUT HIS SELF-CONFIDENCE WILL STEM MOSTLY FROM FACT THAT TOP PARTY OFFICIALS (AND PROBABLY SOVIETS) REGARD HIM AS MUCH MORE RELIABLE.

4. RESURGENCE OF KOMOSCIN'S ILLNESS MAY HAVE HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH TIMING OF REPLACEMENT OF PETER. WITH KOMOSCIN NOT AROUND TO GIVE DAY-TO-DAY DIRECTIVES ON FOREIGN POLICY SOME HUNGARIAN LEADERS (AND UNDOUBTEDLY SOVIETS) PROBABLY FEEL SAFER DURING DELICATE DETENTE PERIOD WITH HARDLINE PUJA IN SADDLE. PUJA HAS REPUTATION AS AN EXCELLENT ADMINISTRATOR (IF THERE IS SUCH AN ANIMAL IN HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT). IF THIS IS TRUE, FONOFF MAY

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BUDAPE 03951 191903Z

BECOME MORE EFFICIENT UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP, ALTHOUGH THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY FOLLOW IF WE ARE TO BELIEVE THOSE WHO CLAIM PUJA HAS BEEN RUNNING FONOFF FOR SOME TIME. IF HE HAS, PUJA'S REPUTATION AS A GOOD ADMINISTRATOR IS LARGELY MYTHICAL.

5. RE POSSIBLE SHIFT IN PERSONNEL POLICY, COMMUNIQUE OF NOV 28 SESSION OF HSWP SAID PARTY HAD "DISCUSSED AND ADOPTED ON BASIS OF ARPAD PULLAI'S REPORT ACCOUNT OF PARTY'S CADRE POLICY AND POSITIONS

OF CADRE AND PERSONNEL WORK." LATER ON, HOWEVER, IN SAME TEXT IN DISCUSSING PARTY CADRES CC HAD FOLLOWING TO SAY:

"POLITICAL RELIABILITY, PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND APTNESS TO BE LEADER ARE THREE REQUIREMENTS WHICH HAVE WITHSTOOD TESTS AS BASIC PRINCIPLES. POLITICAL RELIABILITY AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF CADRES HAS IMPROVED. HOWEVER, A SMALLER PART DOES NOT KNOW HOW TO ENLARGE ITS KNOWLEDGE, DOES NOT KEEP PACE WITH PROGRESS, AND IN LONG RUN CANNOT MEET INCREASING REQUIREMENTS". CC SAID IT PASSED RESOLUTION ON CADRE POLICY WHICH WILL BE PUBLISHED IN PARTELET, PERIODICAL OF CC. PERHAPS WITH FULL PUBLICATION OF RESOLUTION WE MAY HAVE A CLEARER PICTURE OF REASONS BEHIND PETER'S DISMISSAL AT THIS TIME. WE MAY ALSO HAVE GREATER INSIGHT INTO WHETHER FURTHER CHANGES IN OLDER PARTY AND GOVERNMENT FIGURES ARE TO BE EXPECTED.

6. ONE INTERESTING AND PERHAPS KEY QUESTION IS ROLE JANOS KADAR PLAYED IN REMOVAL OF PETER. KADAR IS KNOWN NOT TO HAVE LIKED PUJA PARTICULARLY, CONSIDERING HIM A MAN FAR TOO RIGID FOR PLIANT FOREIGN POLICY KADAR PREFERS TO PURSUE. DID KADAR CHANGE HIS MIND? OR WAS HE UNABLE IN THIS CASE TO OFFER REASONABLE EXCUSE TO DEFLECT SOVIET INSISTENCE ON PUJA? KADAR IS A MAN WHO DOES NOT LIKE CHANGE EITHER IN HIGHU PARTY OR GOVERNMENT RANKS. HE KNOWS AND UNDERSTANDS WELL PRESENT HUNGARIAN PARTY AND GOVERNMENT LEADERS, THEIR PERSONAL STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES. HE FEELS CONFIDENT AND AT EASE IN THEIR MIDST. EXCEPT FOR SOME MINOR CHANGES AND THOSE BROUGHT ABOUT BY DEATH OR CATASTROPHE (E.G, VALYI), HUNGARIAN LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN REMARKABLY STABLE. WHAT WE MUST NOW BE ALERT TO IS WHETHER PETER'SOUSTER SIGNALS BEGINNING OF REMOVAL OF OLD-TIME KADAR CRONIES AND ARRIVAL ON SCENE OF YOUNGER GENERATION OF LEADERS PERHAPS NOT SO RESPONSIVE TO KADAR'S
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PAGE 04 BUDAPE 03951 191903Z

LEADERSHIP.

7. ANNOUNCEMENT OF PETER'S REPLACEMENT BY PUJA ALSO SAID FOMER WOULD TAKE ON NEWLY-ASSIGNED BUT UNSPECIFIED OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS. ONE DIPLOMATIC SOURCE HERE WHO SAYS HE HAS IT ON GOOD AUTHORITY TELLS US THAT PETER WILL REPLACE MIKLOS BERESZTOCZY AS ONE OF VICE PRESIDENTS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.
PEDERSEN

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